

Prey And Predator Part 1 of 3

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 Feedback: Praise and constructive criticism welcomed. Just remember that, contrary to popular belief, I'm an actual person with feelings and an unstable ego. :)

> Distribution: Please ask before distributing.
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>

> CHAPTER 1

> The night was as black as it had ever been, the only illumination was the cool glow of the full moon overhead. A gentle breeze blew from the west, keeping the environment in a state of constant unpredictability.

> The park was desolate. Nothing stirred. Nothing, that is, except two predators. One of which oblivious to the fact that he was the hunted, and not the hunter.

> The vampire walked in the shadows, sniffing the air occasionally for the scent of human blood. Each human had their own distinct scent, but one thing was a constant, and that was the scent of their blood. His yellow eyes scanned the darkness like those of an owl. His ears were tuned in to the slightest sound. His deformed features, a side effect of his immortality, adequately concealed in the shadows. He was ready to pounce at the first sign of human prey.

> His wait was not long. A young human girl strode confidently along

the pathways of the park. So young, so sweet. Not even out of her teenage years, he thought. Her blonde hair was tied back in a loose ponytail, and her well toned figure was clad in the style of the times. Tight black pants, a dark purple tank top and a black leather jacket. The smell of her blood was perfume to him. And she was in his sights. The time was here, there would not be a better opportunity.

> CHAPTER 2

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Another pair of amber eyes watched in the darkness. Concealed behind the brush of the park, the wolf awaited the perfect time to strike. The hunt was always a chain reaction. The first step was to let the prey find its own kill. The next and final step was to bring it down quickly. The prey's hunt was its downfall and the perfect distraction. A split second when its mind was on one thing, it's prey, and not on defense.

>
 Now, the unnatural creature had selected a victim and the hunt was on. The game was about to begin. The wolf crouched close to the ground, preparing to spring much like a cat would do. Her eyes narrowed on her intended kill, the hunger in her belly becoming almost unbearable. Soon, she thought. Very soon. Her talons flexed into the ground, causing the slightest upbrining of dust. Her jet black fur tossed ever so slightly in the wind. With her ears pressed flat against her skull and a barely audible rumble in her chest, she waited, lips curled and fangs bared.

>
 Buffy stopped dead in her tracks. There was something very wrong about the situation at hand. She sensed a vamp, there was no denying that. She knew that when she was about two blocks from the park. But there was something else. She glanced from left to right. Nothing in sight. What she felt, she wasn't sure if she could trust. It wasn't human, of that she was sure. What she wasn't sure of was whether or not it was another vamp, or something much worse. In either case, she didn't like the feeling, nor the feeling that came with it...that she had gotten in deep over her head...again.

>
 The vampire felt a twinge. His prey was startled over something. If he was going to strike, the time had best be now, before she ran. He wasn't about to let this sweet, pure-blooded beauty escape him. Not when he was so hungry, and not when he had the chance to have something so fresh and so alive.

>
 Buffy turned just in time to see the vampire she had sensed spring forth from the shadows. He was large, maybe had been a fitness buff or a jock when he was human. He would not be an easy kill, but she was confident that she could handle him. She ignored the feeling of another presence long enough to reach into her jacket and arm herself with her stake. She stood poised and ready as he advanced on her, his fangs bared, his eyes intent on only one thing...her throat.

>
 It was then that her feeling of unease returned. Never allowing herself to take her eyes off of what was coming towards her, she glanced to her right, seeing the brushes rustle from the corner of her eye. She thought momentarily about breaking this confrontation and running. There would be other vamps, other fights. Fights that she might actually stand a chance of winning. If what was about to come out of those bushes was another vamp, she concluded that from her feelings, it was not a vamp that was like any she had ever encountered, and without the proper preparation, she knew she was toast.

>
 She could not believe what she saw spring forth from the bushes. If it was a vamp, it had certainly learned some new tricks.

>
 The wolf was majestic as it soared through the air. Buffy had seen wolves before in zoos, and had seen many a documentary on TV, but this wasn't a wolf from any zoo. The creature was massive. Easily the size of a 6 foot man, maybe larger. Every muscle in the beast was tensed. Its eyes were narrowed, and its growl was haunting. Much deeper and menacing than she could have imagined. And fangs? Any vamp would be envious. The wolves she had seen had average canines, like dogs. Not this creature. The fangs on this animal were at least three times the size of a normal wolf's.

>
 The ebony animal soared past Buffy in its pounce, the force knocking her back and almost off her feet. She stood, mouth agape, as it landed square on the vampire's chest, driving him to the ground. With one quick swipe of its paw, the wolf had opened the vampire's chest. It burrowed its head inside and quickly extracted the heart, which was swallowed in one vicious gulp. The vampire went limp, and the wolf relaxed. It turned towards Buffy, ears pointed and head cocked to one side. It almost looked to her like that RCA dog sitting in front of the TV.

>
 Buffy stared in disbelief. This creature had taken the vampire down in one swift motion. And no dust! The vampire was obviously dead, but there was no dust, only a messy body to clean up. Great. The town would surely go into another uproar once the cops discovered this.

>
 The wolf took one last glance at Buffy. It snarled once, a warning not to approach. Then it grasped the vampire's neck in its mouth and dragged the body into the shadows effortlessly, as if it weighed next to nothing.

>
 As the animal took its kill and vanished from sight, tail high and proud, Buffy stood, still in amazement. However, in this amazement, her mind was flooded with questions. Could the vampire have a natural enemy besides the slayer? Was that even possible? And what WAS that thing? Natural animals are supposed to be afraid of vampires. So what's the deal? As always, her mind came back to the same three answers.

>
 Library...Research...Giles.

>
 CHAPTER 3

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"A what?" Xander asked. His look of utter astonishment and wonder was second only to that of Giles. Both Oz and Willow kept straight faces.

>
 "A wolf," Buffy continued. "only not."

>
 "Buffy," Giles interjected, trying to bring reason to the story, "there's no chance of there being wolves in Sunnydale. Statistically, it's too big of a population base. Wolves are afraid of humans, and besides, this isn't their habitat."

>
 "Hello? Are we all listening?" Buffy asked. "I already told you that it couldn't have been any natural wolf. I've been to the zoo, and I've watched TV. This thing was twice as big as any wolf I've ever seen in captivity. We're talking massive. Huge. Almost deformed. The thing had fangs that...that..." Buffy trailed off, unable to find the right words, and looked to Oz. "You didn't happen to get out of your cage last night, did you?"

>
 "Who, me?" Oz asked innocently. "No way. I was locked up nice

and tight."

>
 "I think I've seen something like what you're talking about in one of my books, Buffy," Willow said. "One of those demons and monsters books. Of course, it's supposed to be totally unreal, but hey...maybe it's not."

>
 "There is one book we could consult," Giles interjected. "The Encyclopedia of Arcane Knowledge. A lot of terms and definitions. If this thing you described has a name, it will be there, but the research will be tedious. It's not as if this book has a glossary with the words 'a wolf...but not' listed."

>
 "Nice attempt at a funny, Giles, but I'm serious," Buffy continued. "Hey, as much as I hate to admit it, maybe I should talk to Angel about this. If there is a natural enemy to vampires, he might know about it, or at least be able to provide some insight."

>
 Giles furrowed his brow at the thought of Angel. However, she had a point. "If you consult Angel, be careful. In the meantime, I'll look around here," he said plainly. Buffy could tell he was displeased at the idea, but agreeable that it was a good one.

>
 "Settled, then," Buffy said as she rose from her chair and gathered her books.

>
 CHAPTER 4

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Angel was never that easy to talk to, but on this night, Buffy had a more than average difficult time in extracting information from him.

>
 "Angel, please," she pleaded. "If you know something about what I saw last night, then you have to tell me. I don't know if I'm in danger or what..."

>
 "You're not," Angel said abruptly. "At least, you shouldn't be. But I am." He turned away from her, obviously distressed, and began to pace.

>
 "I don't understand. What is this thing?" Buffy persisted.

>
 Angel glanced back, barely allowing her to see his eyes from over his shoulder. "A vampire killer," he said simply.

>
 "That helps. I already KNEW that!" she said in frustration.

>
 "Look!" Angel snapped, quickly turning and facing her. "You don't have a thing to worry about. But every vampire does. We have a chance at defeating slayers...they're human. We don't have a glimmer of hope in defeating this kind of creature."

>
 "Are you saying that it's like you? What IS it?"

>
 "No, not like me, or any vampire," Angel said.

>
 "Then what?" Buffy asked.

>
 "It's a half-breed," Angel said reluctantly. "A cross. Legend has it that a long time ago, a human devised a way to cross the genes of a vampire with the genes of a werewolf. That human became the creature you described and created a new race, a race whose prey is not human, but vampire."

>
 "So this mutt," Buffy began, seeing Angel raise his eyebrows at her term, "Sorry," she said, "no pun intended. But anyway, so this thing hunts vampires. But it's a cross of vampire and werewolf. Why doesn't it hunt pure werewolves too?"

>
 "A werewolf isn't as tainted as a vampire is. Their curse is only once a month."

>
 Buffy choked on Angel's words. "You have no idea of the

implications you just made about curses," she giggled morbidly.

>
 Angel raised an eyebrow in confusion. "I'm sorry?"

>
 "Oh, nothing," Buffy stammered, trying to gain control of herself. "Dirty teenage mind in overdrive. Does this thing have a name?" she asked, getting back on track.

>
 "No, not really," Angel said. "I suppose there might be something somewhere that would classify it, but there is no real name. Nothing generic anyway. It's a fairy tail, in a sense, for all vampires. Beware of the wolf." He chuckled. "I never thought it was real."

>
 "So, what should I look for?" Buffy asked. "What are this creature's characteristics?"

>
 "Well, you've already seen it in wolf form," Angel said. "According to the legends, these creatures can morph into wolves at any time. They can control their changes, unlike werewolves, who are dependent upon the moon and unable to stop their metamorphosis."

>
 "Okay, mental note: can morph at will. Next."

>
 "When they're in human form, they should be very easy to spot, especially if there are other pure vampires around. Vampires will be very uneasy when one of these beings enters their domain. They can also 'half-morph.' In other words, show their vampire tendencies. But they don't have deformed features like pure vampires do. The fangs elongate, eyes turn yellow, but that's it. No facial alterations."

>
 "Okay. Still keep their looks and manage to pull off the threatening. Now, how do I kill them?"

>
 Angel shook his head. "That," he began, "is not so easy. If it were, we as vampires wouldn't feel so threatened. They have all of our strengths, none of our weaknesses. The same goes for their werewolf tendencies. Silver won't kill them. Nor will stakes or daylight."

>
 "You mean, they can walk around in the daytime?" Buffy asked.

>
 "Just like you. The werewolf in them counters the vampire's inability to withstand sunlight. The vampire in them counters the werewolf's weakness to silver, and so on."

>
 "Great. So how DOES one kill them?"

>
 "Legend has it that the only way to kill them is to decapitate them. Or, if you can get close enough, to rip out the heart and destroy it."

>
 "Nice. Not exactly without mess," Buffy mused.

>
 "There is something else you should know," Angel said. "No one really knows the extent of their powers. Some are said to be highly telepathic. Some have unnatural strength. Some are proficient witches. The list goes on as to what they can do."

>
 "In other words, they're like super demons."

>
 Angel smirked. "In a manner of speaking, yes," he said. "But, as I've said, you shouldn't be in any danger. They feed on vampires. When the vampires run out and the food is gone, they move on."

>
 "More legend?" she asked.

>
 "Of course. I don't think there's anything written down about them. But, according to the stories, they were created to save humans from the evils of the vampire race. So, why would they prey on you?"

>
 "Desperate for food? Or maybe just because they get pissed off? No matter the reason, I don't want to take the chance."

>
 Angel nodded. "I can understand where you're coming from," he said. "Be careful."

>
 "You too," she said, moving closer to him. She embraced him. "Do me a favor," she said, her head still pressed against his chest.

>
 "Name it."
>
 "Lay low for a while," she said. "You just came back from the dead. Don't go dying again on me, ok?"
>
 He chuckled slightly and pulled away, looking down into her eyes. He smiled and gave a small nod.
>
 CHAPTER 5
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The Bronze was more crowded than usual for a Thursday night. As Buffy entered, she remembered Angel's words, and looked around for any signs of unease amongst the clientele. Everyone seemed in harmony, dancing to the rhythmic beats, so she proceeded to her gang's set area of the club, a small booth towards the back.

>
 She hadn't been there long, when the gang arrived, surprisingly with Giles in tow. Buffy had to raise her eyebrows. They all quickly proceeded over to her and took a respective seat.

>
 "Canis Nosferatu," Giles said.

>
 "Hi Giles, fancy meeting you here. How am I? Great, thanks for asking," Buffy quirked.

>
 Giles became somewhat flustered. "Yes, yes of course. Hello, how are you? Now that the pleasantries are exchanged..."

>
 "Yes," Buffy said, "please continue. Canis God bless you?"

>
 Giles just shook his head. "No, Canis Nosferatu. A rare breed of vampire, if you will. A cross between..."

>
 "A vampire and a werewolf," Buffy finished his sentence for him. "Angel clued me in. But he said that he didn't think that anything was written about them. How did you find anything?"

>
 "Well, Angel was partially right," Giles said. "There are things written, but they're few and far between. So, I played a hunch and called an old friend. Mostly everything is legend, passed via word of mouth through the ages."

>
 Buffy sighed. "So, was Angel right when he said that killing these things was going to be messy?"

>
 "Well, um..." Giles stuttered, "if you consider severing the creature's spine messy, then, yes."

>
 "Severing the spine? Angel said decapitation."

>
 "Same animal, Buff," Xander interjected. "Decapitating does sever the spine."

>
 "And it's also the easiest way to sever the spine," Oz added. "The neck is the only real place to make a cut like that. Otherwise you'd have to actually reach into their backs, remove the spine, then sever it."

>
 "Thank you Stephen King," Buffy said flatly.

>
 "What precisely did Angel tell you?" Giles asked.

>
 "To make a long story short, that it was a vampire-werewolf cross, that it can walk around in the daytime, how to kill it, and that it feeds on vampires."

>
 Giles raised an eyebrow. "There's a little more."

>
 "Oh?" Buffy was intrigued.

>
 "Like the wolf," Giles continued, "it travels in a pack most times. It is a very social creature, even in human form. No less than five in a group. It is rare that they are solitary."

>
 "But I only saw one last night," Buffy said.

>
 "Exactly. You only SAW one. You say it dragged the vampire's corpse off after the kill?" Giles asked.

>
 "Yeah, like a rag doll," Buffy answered.

>
 "Probably to feed the rest of its pack. Buffy..." Giles hesitated.

>
 "What is it?" she asked.

>
 "The oldest of these creatures is rumored to be over 12,000 years old."

>
 "Isn't that like, older than the planet?" Xander asked.

>
 Giles again shook his head. "Buffy, there are other social dynamics you should know about."

>
 "I'm listening," Buffy said.

>
 "Like all wolf packs, there is an alpha...but only one alpha. In natural wolf packs, there is one of each sex. In Canis Nosferatu packs, there is only one, and it can be either sex. The alpha is usually one of the oldest, if not the oldest in the group, and is always the strongest. And there are two ways one can become a Canis Nosferatu."

>
 Buffy looked surprised. "Only two? I thought this was super demon."

>
 "Please don't joke," Giles continued. "If this creature is here in Sunnydale, we may have real problems, or we may be blessed. Only time will tell. But in the meantime, yes. Two ways. They can reproduce since they are a genetic crossbreed, instead of a mere 'infection' such as vampirism. One can be born a Canis Nosferatu. Or, they can be turned."

>
 "You mean drained almost lifeless, like a vamp does?" Buffy asked.

>
 "Yes, but then they must also feed from a Canis Nosferatu to complete the transformation. Legend also has it that pure vampires can be turned, as well as pure werewolves, and of course, humans. However, they are very selective as to who they turn."

>
 "Shucks, and here I thought I stood a chance at joining the Demon Wolf Club, and here I find out I need references," Buffy mused.

>
 Xander chuckled as Giles rolled his eyes in angst. Meanwhile, Oz sat straight in the booth, eyes fixed toward the door to the club.

>
 "Oz?" Willow asked. "Something wrong?"

>
 "Bad vibe," Oz said simply.

>
 All heads turned in the direction Oz's eyes were pointing. Entering the club was a woman of medium build dressed in what appeared to be a metal halter top and black leather pants. She had a short crop of curled red hair and emerald eyes that scanned the room with a cunning efficiency. She looked over each individual as she slithered into the club, each bodily action more fluid in movement than the last. Her eyes found Oz and her ruby lips curled into a slight smirk as she moved on. All she passed were enchanted by her, including Xander and Giles, who could not take their eyes from her sight. She slid up onto a barstool and crossed her legs, clad in metal boots that perfectly matched the top she was wearing. Even from the distance, Buffy noticed that each boot was outfitted with a steel talon on each knee and each ankle.

>
 "Nice footwear," Buffy commented. "Either she's very kinky, very gothic, or very out for trouble."

>
 The redheaded woman turned her gaze towards the door and smiled as another woman, this one a striking long maned and slender blonde, entered flanked on either side by two men. The woman wore tight black pants and an emerald bodice. The men were each clad in dark apparel, black pants, shirts and leather jackets. Buffy could tell that the man to the woman's right was obviously calm and collected. He moved with the same grace and fluidity as the redhead and the blonde. The other, she concluded, was a loaded gun. His

movements had an undertone of grace, yet they were jerky, cocky and barely controlled. His all-knowing smile was both charming and devilish.

>
 The trio moved from the entrance and made their way towards the redhead at the bar, who greeted them with utmost familiarity. Buffy scanned the room, noticing that some of the club's regulars were beginning to show some distress. Vamps coming out of their shells.

>
 "Giles," Buffy said, not taking her eyes from the foursome. She got no response. Both he and Xander were still spellbound. "Giles!" she said louder.

>
 "Hm, yes?" Giles said, snapping from his trance.

>
 "Something tells me that these are the people we're looking for," Buffy commented.

>
 She no sooner spoke the words than the first vampire showed his nature. His face contorted quickly, and he bared his fangs at the newcomers. Soon after three others changed and stood at the side of the first. All the while, the group at the bar sat back quite at ease, merely content at watching the show.

>
 Other customers to the club were leaving rapidly. Girls shook nervously as they were escorted out by boyfriends who had no explanation. Meanwhile, vampires were transforming left and right, showing their true selves to the strangers.

>
 Finally, the first vampire to transform was the first to wage war. He broke free of the group that had assembled and charged headlong into the group of strangers at the bar, fangs bared and growling.

>
 The redhead had apparently seen it coming. She hopped from her barstool at the first sign of the vampire's advance, planting her feet firmly. As his charge neared her, she swung her right leg in an outward moving crescent kick, the talon on the heel of her boot catching the vampire's neck and separating his head from his body in one quick stroke.

>
 "Now," she said in a mischievously velvet voice, "anyone else care to try their luck?"

>
 The vampires looked at one another and back to the group at the bar, who were still very calm and collected. A small group of vampires apparently decided that this was not a battle they could win, and began to slink towards the door.

>
 Buffy watched the vampires and stared with amazement at what met them at the door, blocking their escape. Another woman stood in the doorway. Clad in black leather pants and a lace up blue and black leather halter that barely held her endowments, she stood her ground firmly, looking each vamp dead in the face with eyes the color of the purest amethyst. Her black hair was long and flowing, easily reaching her waist. Her hands slid down her thighs, removing what appeared to be two metal batons of some sort from her boots. She stood poised, one in each hand, ready for whatever the vampires had to confront her with.

>
 Buffy looked to Giles, who looked back to her.

>
 "The alpha," they said in unison.

>
 CHAPTER 6

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The three vampires at the door showed no hesitation in their attack. If they couldn't go around this woman, then they would go through her.

>
 She was ready for them, though. With a quick swing of her arms, the batons she held hit them square and knocked all three back to the floor.

>
 The alpha walked casually down the stairs entering into the club, advancing slowly on the three that had assaulted her. The three vampires had gotten back to their feet and stood ready, encircling the alpha.

>
 The alpha kept a close eye on each attacker. She knew that when one would advance, the other two surely would as well. She stood still and relaxed, a small smirk on her lips. She looked the three over once again, and then, with a flick of each wrist, the batons in her hand unfolded to large metal oriental fans. Buffy watched the woman in amazement, and saw in the blink of an eye her deep violet eyes turn to the brightest of gold. In a sudden movement, the alpha lunged forward, baring her large fangs with a threatening hiss.

>
 The vampires saw the challenge and accepted. The three rushed in on the alpha, who stood up straight and spun her body clockwise, rotating her arms with unbelievable speed. In seconds, the fans in her hands had severed the three vampires' heads and left their bodies laying in the ground, only inches from where they had just advanced from.

>
 The alpha turned towards the small group of vampires that remained huddled across from the four at the bar, who still kept close watch on them. She looked to Buffy's table, noting the girl and her friends. She licked the blood from the blades of one of her fans and again focused her attention on the group of vampires. She fixed her gaze on them firmly.

>
 The alpha's eyes seemed to glaze over. Buffy and the others noticed what seemed to be a ripple in the air, and the alpha drew it to her. She lunged forward and unleashed an unholy shriek, much like the scream of a banshee. The vampires dropped immediately to their knees, holding their ears, which began to bleed.

>
 The alpha continued her shriek. The vampires bled from their eyes, then noses, then mouths. Their bodies began to convulse and shake. The alpha then heightened the pitch of her shriek, and each vampire lost his or her head in a grand explosion.

>
 Silence filled the club. The alpha turned to the group at the bar and announced in a dark, rich voice, "Dinner is served."

>
 CHAPTER 7

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The group at the bar were speedy and efficient at cleaning up the corpses. Each dead vampire was dragged out of the club, and no trace was left to mark their ghoulish passing.

>
 The alpha turned and made her way to Buffy's table. Giles rose and stood at the side of the table, prepared to face the woman, whatever she was.

>
 The alpha smiled, her eyes mischievous and friendly. "Defensive," she said, sliding up next to Giles. "I like that in a man."

>
 "Okay, another 'ew' moment," Buffy said flatly.

>
 The alpha turned her attention to Buffy. "You're the girl from last night, aren't you?" she asked. "I knew when I saw you that we'd meet again. But I never thought you'd be the slayer. I'm Raven."

>
 "K, Raven," Buffy said, "and you knew I'm the slayer how?"

>
 "You project it in every mannerism you have. I'm surprised I didn't notice it last night when I saw you in the park. Maybe it had

something to do with your nervousness around me."

>
 "Buffy, you were nervous?" Xander asked. "And I didn't get it on film."

>
 "Xander, you try staring a wolf the size of your father in the face and tell me how together you'd be," Oz interrupted.

>
 "And you're the werewolf," Raven continued. She gave a slight smile. "When Razor conveyed to me that there was a werewolf in here..."

>
 "Razor?" Xander asked.

>
 "The auburn hair beauty you had such admiration for," Raven purred.

>
 "Conveyed?" Giles asked. "But you never spoke..."

>
 "We don't have to," Raven said, turning to face him.

"Telepathy. It's a gift only truly developed as one of us gets older and strong enough to fine tune it. What you saw in here tonight, the mass 'splatting' of vampire heads, for lack of a better term, is an extension of my telepathic powers."

>
 "And how old does one have to be to accomplish such a feat of mental strength?" Giles asked.

>
 Raven smiled seductively. "If you're asking me how old I am, well, let's just say that I stopped counting when I got to 10,000."

>
 Buffy's eyes widened. "Are you the oldest? The first?"

>
 Raven chuckled. "No, no, my dear. That title is held with an iron fist by none other than my mother, Ariana."

>
 "Okay," Buffy said, becoming deadly serious, "and the ten million dollar question is this...are we next on the menu?"

>
 Raven tossed her head back and unleashed rich laughter. "Oh goodness, no, child!" Her eyes twinkled brightly in the dim lights of the club. "No offense, but humans just aren't my taste. In fact, very few of my pack would dare bring down one of you, and only then if they were starving or provoked."

>
 "You mean there's more to your pack than those that were here tonight?" Giles asked.

>
 Raven turned to him, again flashing a seductive smile. "Oh yes. They are just my hunting party. Razor is one of the best huntresses. Ivy, the blonde, is equally formidable, as is Ash. Deacon, however, is in training, which is why he was with us tonight."

>
 "Let me guess," Buffy interjected. "He was the cocky one?"

>
 Raven sighed, "I'm afraid so. If his mannerisms didn't even escape you, then he still has much to learn." She slid up onto the table, her face showing no expression of emotion. "If I can impart any wisdom to you all this night, it is this. Stay clear of Deacon, and Razor for that matter. I trust them because I am alpha, and they dare not challenge me. But if any of you get in their way, it could be devastating."

>
 "I thought you said that they wouldn't pose a threat," Giles said.

>
 Raven turned to him, her expression saddening. Giles looked into her eyes and read her features clearly. She was hiding something.

>
 "Please," she said, "just take note of my words. And now, if you'll all be so kind to excuse me," she said leaping from the table, "I must go rejoin them before they stash the spoils of the evening without feeding the others. They are a wonderful hunting party, but selfish in their own right."

>
 And, with that, Raven disappeared from the club just as mysteriously as she had arrived.

>

>

>

End
file.